

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of :
Paul Rich : Group Art Unit: 1392
Application No. 10/760,464 : Examiner: McDonald
Filed January 21, 2004 :

ELECTROSTATIC CLAMPING OF THIN WAFERS IN PLASMA PROCESSING VACUUM
CHAMBER

REPLY BRIEF

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
“eFILING”
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Sir:

This Reply Brief is respectfully submitted in response to the Examiner’s Answer dated February 4, 2009.

In the Answer, the Examiner essentially reiterates his argument already of record. However, Applicants are compelled to respond to an apparent mischaracterization by the Examiner of Applicants’ comments contained in the Appeal Brief. In particular, at pages 10-11 of the Answer, the Examiner states:

“Applicant admits that SiC like all materials can act as an electrical conductor given the right conditions. Furthermore as evidenced by Terashiga et al. SiC is shown to exhibit electrical conductivity. It is the Examiner’s position that SiC is an electrical conductive material based on the evidence and the admission by Application.”

For the record, Applicants made no admission that “SiC is an electrical conductive material.” Indeed, at page 12 of the Appeal Brief, Applicants specifically argue to the contrary as follows:

“As is well known in the art, silicon carbide (SiC) is a semiconductor material which exhibits insulating properties in the absence of an applied voltage exceeding a threshold voltage. SiC is not an electrical conductor as the Examiner contends, nor are the remaining material examples listed at column 3, lines 53-54, of Mohn et al. Indeed, these materials are well known to function as insulators and/or insulating semiconductors.

The semi-conductive properties of SiC are notoriously well known in the art. As evidence thereof, attached is an article entitled “Influence of Microstructural Variation on the Electrical Properties of SiC Microthermistors.” See, for example, the introduction section of this article.

The Examiner apparently contends that since SiC (like virtually all materials) can be made conductive if a high enough voltage is applied thereto, SiC constitutes a material which is “electrical conductor” as recited in the present claims. However, such contention is clearly not a reasonable interpretation of the phrase “electrical conductor”. Moreover, Mohn et al. describes no conditions in which the SiC shield thereof would become conductive.” (Emphasis added.)

Applicants’ position is clear – one of ordinary skill in the art would not reasonably interpret the phrase “is an electrical conductor” as encompassing SiC.

This is especially the case since at no time does Mohn et al. describes no conditions in which the SiC shield thereof would become conductive.

Following the Examiner's logic, an oak tree is an electrical conductor because it conducts electricity when struck by lightening. Clearly, no one would reasonably describe a wood material as an electrical conductor.

Further, it should be pointed out that the Examiner's interpretation of the claims ascribes no meaning to the phrase "is an electrical conductor". The Board is well aware of the impropriety of interpreting claims in this manner.

As has been already demonstrated in the record, an electrical conductor is a material which offers low resistance to the passage of an electrical current. SiC is manifestly not such a material.

Reversal of each of the rejections of record is again respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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